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STATE PASS TO AID

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers published today, September 23, focuses on recent developments in the Palestinian issue. Story highlights Israel's "stranglehold" on Arafat and the destruction of buildings within his headquarters complex. Stories also highlight the Palestinian people's demonstrations in support of Arafat, in what some papers called "the new Intifada," crediting the demonstrations for bringing international pressure on Israel to halt its actions.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The dangers in the 'Bush doctrine'"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (09/23) editorializes: "As the Middle East has yet again been ignited by the brutality unleashed by Ariel Sharon, the inadequacy of Washington's Middle East policy is underlined by the devastation and bloody violence raging in the West Bank. The world has been almost unanimous in condemning the latest Israeli aggression against Palestinian President Yaser Arafat. But only a mild call for 'restraint' has so far come from Washington. The Bush administration has at best shied away from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, when it has not blatantly supported Sharon's policies. After September 11, Bush . only read the Mideast conflict in the language of the 'war on terror', unable to identify the root causes of the problem. His 'vision' for a two-state solution lacked a vital element: a strategy. The 'Bush doctrine' is essentially a security doctrine. And a threat to international law. The Security policy of the Bush administration is based on preemptive military strikes against any perceived enemy. Today it is Iraq. Who is next?"

-- "The tables will turn"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (09/23) editorializes: With arrogance, the Sharon government continues its crazy war against Palestinian legitimacy, and with aggression and racism, Israel's war machine destroys the presidential headquarters and opens fire on the Palestinian people. Instead of weakening President Arafat and the legitimate Palestinian leadership, the outcome was different. The tables have turned. What the Palestinian cities witnessed over the past two days was as good as a referendum about the Palestinian leadership, a vote in favor of Palestinian legitimacy and a rejection of the U.S-backed Israeli plans of aggression. It is a national responsibility for Arabs to adopt a more effective move to put a stop to the new aggression and its objectives."

-- "The 'Bush Palestinian state' trick

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (09/23): "We are watching the collapse of the Palestinian Authority under the duress of Israeli weaponry that is strongly backed by American policies. What Sharon's tanks are destroying is not only the Oslo accords, but also the foundations of peace that were established in the Madrid conference. President Bush's talk about a Palestinian state to exist next to the Israeli state must not fool anyone. Sharon's right-wing government did not respect the interim Oslo accords, let alone Bush's Palestinian state. Destroying the Palestinian Authority does not mean opening the road to Bush's Palestinian state. It rather holds a plan to legalize the Zionist occupation and settlements, to reject the establishment of a

Palestinian state over Palestinian soil, and to turn the Palestinian issue into a game played by the two Israeli parties, who both believe in the transfer and the establishment of a Palestinian state outside Palestine."

GNEHM